



## KACOKE MADIT OPENING ADDRESS

Dr. Patrick Otto

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**T**he Bishop of Kitgum Diocese, The Rt. Rev. Macleord Baker Ochola II, Members of Parliament, Distinguished guests, fellow delegates;

In my capacity as Co-ordinator for the London Organising Committee (LOC) and Chairman of this Conference, I welcome you all to Kacoke Madit (KM). KM is unprecedented in the history of Acholi people, for it is the first time that we have of our own will come together from all corners of the globe to exchange views openly on the problems affecting our land and us as a people.

I would from the outset like to thank you all sincerely for the support you have shown for KM by registering to attend it. My thanks particularly go to the delegates from overseas who have travelled thousands of miles to from Uganda, Kenya, The Netherlands, Denmark, the USA, Canada, Germany, Sweden, Croatia and the UK, be with us here today.

It has been a long and at times difficult journey to KM. There have been high points and low points. Through all this, we the organisers of this conference, the London Organising Committee, kept our word to the Acholi people. That is **TO PROVIDE OUR PEOPLE WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET IN A CONFERENCE**, to exchange views, particularly regarding the 11 year war in Acholi with a view to reaching a consensus on the most practical and effective way of achieving a speedy and permanent resolution of the conflict. This therefore is an opportunity that must be used effectively for the benefit of our suffering people. We should be able to look back at KM in years to come as an opportunity well taken and exploited to the full.

As you may have heard last night at the pre-conference get together, the idea of holding this KM was conceived last year by our brothers and sisters in North America, in response to increasing concerns about the deteriorating security situation in Acholi, and the escalation of the war between the UPDA and the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) and other fighting groups. Those of us who shared their concerns came forwards and volunteered to organise KM. The volunteers who formed the LOC did so without coercion or other influences. They did so because of their deep concern about the plight of Acholi people. Fellow delegate, the spirit of unity, sacrifice and dedication of the LOC must be commended. I feel privileged to have led such a dedicated and committed team of Acholi men and women.

Fellow Acholi, our people at home have experienced 11 years of terrible suffering due to the ongoing civil war and all the worst consequences of a bloody war. The loss of lives has been heavy, the suffering desperate. The suffering has gone on for too long. It is time that we Acholi people gathered here today reach a consensus and irrespective of, our politics, whether we are in government or in the LRA/M, or our other affiliations and beliefs, let us from the start of this conference say with a single voice, in the famous words of a political party slogan: **ENOUGH IS ENOUGH**. The suffering of our people must end.

### Conference Agenda

Our conference agenda consists of 3 parts as follows;

#### 1. The War in Acholi

- Its origin, causes, effects and possible resolution
- Implications for regional stability
- The roles of governments and organisations.

#### 2. Acholi Unity and Solidarity

Towards consensus building  
Acholi as a people and their place in Uganda

#### 3. Reconstructing and building Acholi and the way forwards.

### The Conference Programme

You will find the conference programmes for Saturday and Sunday in your folders. The conference as you are aware is presentation based and will consist of;

- Plenary sessions, each with a different Chairman.
- Question and answer sessions following the plenary sessions.
- Workshop/Syndicate sessions.
- Feedback sessions and
- Summary sessions at the end of each day.

The 3 main parts of the conference deal with the 3 main agenda areas. Today we will deal with The War in Acholi and Rebuilding and Reconstructing Acholi, while tomorrow we will have the session on Acholi Unity and solidarity, the Syndicate and workshop sessions and finally the

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Concluding Session from which we should aim to issue a declaration and our conference resolutions.

This conference has rules, which all delegates must observe, as follows;

- There will be no interruption of presenters
- Points of Order or information will not be allowed during presentations.
- Questions will be answered only during the open Question and Answer sessions
- Contributions to the conference must deal with issues and not personalities.
- Proper conduct will be expected from all delegates.

Additionally, I would like to appeal to all presenters to keep their presentations strictly within the time allotted to them.

Ladies and Gentlemen, organising this conference has been a learning process for us in the LOC as well as for members of our communities. If any aspect of the conference is not perfect, it will have resulted from unavoidable

circumstances, not from lack of trying. We therefore ask for your understanding in these cases.

### **Our expectations**

Fellow delegates, our people all over the world have very high expectations from this conference. I would therefore like to appeal to you all to dedicate yourselves to the task at hand and to ensure that this conference goes a long way towards enhancing the cause of peace in Acholi. We must at the end of this conference be in a position to reach resolutions that contain measures to end the conflict that are practical and achievable. We should be able to set targets for the achievement of the objectives that we will set ourselves. We should within a relatively short period of time be able to look back and establish what we have achieved in ending the suffering of Acholi people.

Fellow delegates I do not have any more to say at this stage other than to wish you all happy deliberations and to ask for God's guidance in all that we do to ensure the success of this conference.

Thank you very much.